

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THREE ADDRESSES

DELIVERED BY

PROFESSORS IN UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

AT A SERVICE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
FOUR HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF

JOHN CALVIN

IN THE ADAMS CHAPEL
ON MONDAY EVENING, THE THIRD OF MAY
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND NINE

THE REV. PROFESSOR WILLIAM WALKER ROCKWELL, S.T.B., LIC.TH.

CALVIN AND THE REFORMATION

THE REV. PROFESSOR WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, PH.D., D.D.

CALVIN'S INFLUENCE UPON THEOLOGY

THE REV. PROFESSOR THOMAS CUMING HALL, D.D.

THE INNER SPIRIT OF THE CALVINISTIC
PURITAN STATE

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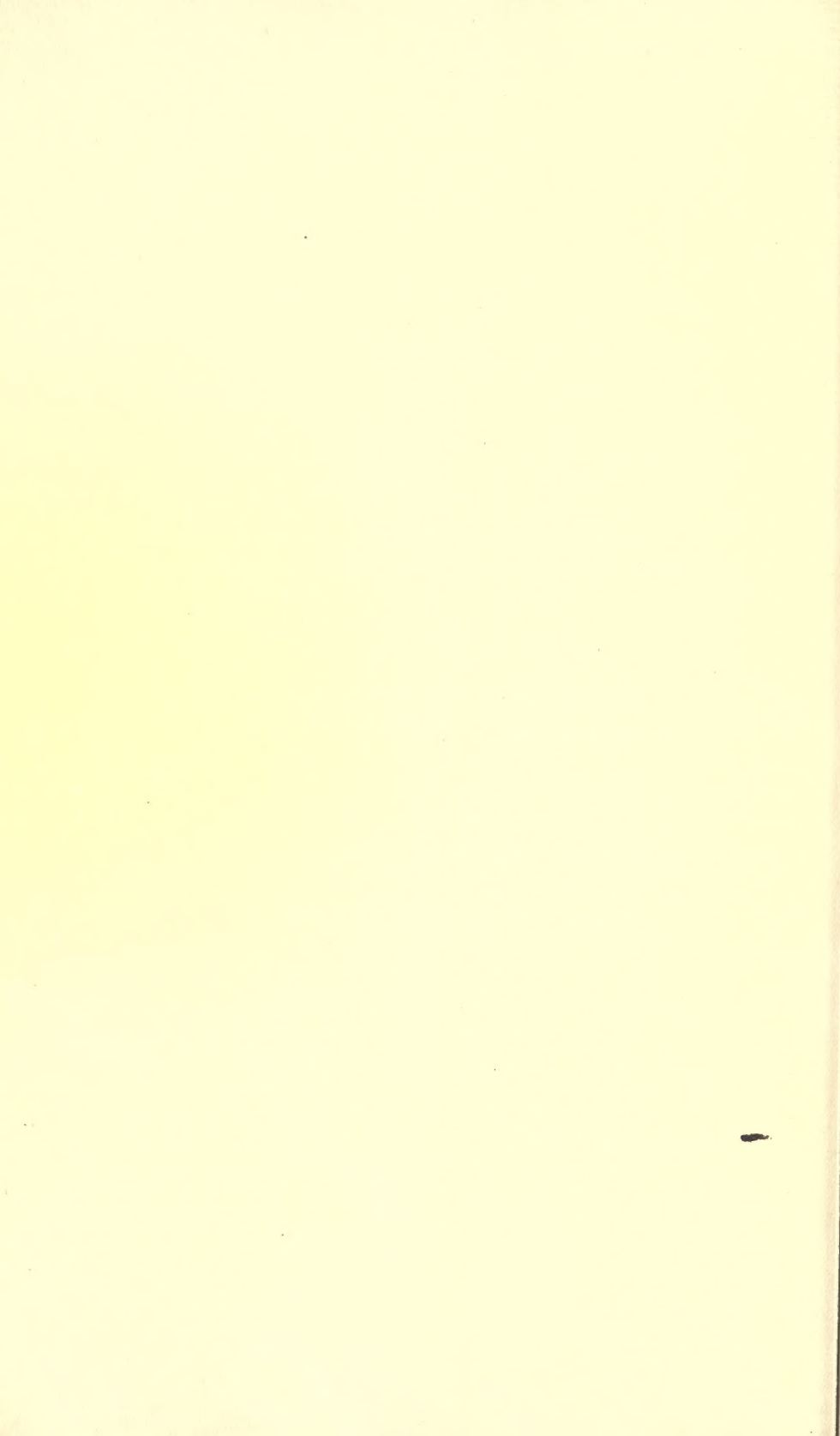
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I.

CALVIN AND THE REFORMATION.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM WALKER ROCKWELL, S.T.B., LIC.TH.

Four hundred years ago, on the tenth of July, John Calvin saw the light. The world into which he was born was that of the Renaissance; an age wakened out of mediæval lethargy, alert and radiant with the joy of discovery. The caravels of Columbus had beaten their way across the watery barrier, winning for Spain the spoil of an undreamed-of continent. Hardy Portuguese navigators had circled Africa, opening a sea route to the mysterious Orient. The horizon of mankind was broadening to East and to West: and when Magellan circumnavigated the globe, East and West were to meet and merge. Expansion, comprehension, was the passion of the age, not only in material affairs, but in the realm of the spirit as well. New breadth of view came from the study of Greek literature: glimpses of a society where no one feared pope or inquisitor, where each man was free to feast his soul on beauty, where every spirit was permitted at will to soar forth into the empyrean. The charm and the freshness of the old Hellenic life laid hold of the imagination of Europe. From the cloister-school to the university, from the country parsonage to the Vatican, pulsed the New Learning; and the novel invention of the printing-press made possible its rapid diffusion.

In France the forerunners of the Reformation were men of the type of Erasmus: keen philologists, amiable litterateurs, churchmen who valued organization more highly than the truth. Men like Lefèvre d'Étaples and Roussel were conformists to the core, and abominated all dissenters. He who ~~who~~ had the courage to inaugurate the Protestant revolt was not a Frenchman, but a German. Martin Luther little thought

when he posted his theses at Wittenberg that he was rending Europe into hostile camps. He soon found, however, that he must either submit to the Papacy or do his utmost to overthrow it; and his plan of campaign was to undermine the Pope's authority by insisting on the primacy of the Bible, and by teaching the man in the street how to find God without the assistance of a priest. In the business of salvation Luther eliminated the ecclesiastical middleman, and taught even the humblest peasant to deal directly with headquarters. The success of Luther's doctrine of Christian liberty was astounding: but the Lutheran Reformation was weak on two sides. First, Luther lacked organizing ability; consequently he was content to leave the government of the church in the hands of the civil authorities, and thus the Lutheran churches became utterly dependent on the state. Second, Luther was without the power to construct a system of theology; though fertile in ideas, he did not care to study out their logical relationships and implications. At this point Melancthon supplemented him, but was himself never interested in thinking the Protestant position through from A to Z. Thus the Reformation was at a great disadvantage at two crucial points where the Roman Church was strong: in compactness of organization and in definiteness of doctrine. For the lack of these two qualities the German Reformation came near being a failure. What Protestantism needed was an organizer of men and of ideas; one characterized above all by a sense of law and order, a lucid grasp of principle: qualities which are preëminently French. Such a leader was raised up for it in the person of the Frenchman John Calvin.

Calvin was, however, not merely a Frenchman; he was a native of the North of France. He was born in Picardy, a province where men do not do things by halves, but are eager and persistent partisans. To French logic Calvin added Picard loyalty to ideas, and the combination shook Europe. The elements which combined to form the explosive were not new;

most of what Calvin taught had been said already. When he was in the cradle, Luther at Wittenberg was teaching in the University; Melanchthon at Heidelberg was a precocious student; Zwingli, among the Alps, a successful pastor; and Henry VIII had just been crowned King of England. It is therefore evident that Calvin belongs to the second generation of Protestant reformers; that he stood on the shoulders of the great pioneers.

By the time he had come to manhood, Lutheranism had by a dozen years outgrown its first stage of development, when it had been an enthusiastic, patriotic, and religious protest of the leaders of the majority of the German people against papal tyranny. By 1530 it had become an ecclesiastical and political party, with its well-defined creeds and platforms. Luther had ceased to dream of reforming the Pope of Rome; he saw that religious reformation would mean ecclesiastical revolution. The era of high hopes and vague thinking was past; the lines between the Protestants and the Catholics were drawn with considerable accuracy. Calvin profited by these experiences of Luther's; he never passed through a storm and stress period; he came onto the scene when the first hand-to-hand conflicts were over, and the two armies, separated for the while, glared at each other from behind a definite series of positions. It was Calvin's task to strengthen the Protestant defences and devise new ways of breaking through the Roman lines.

Calvin's life falls into five periods, which I shall treat very briefly. The first period extends to the time of his conversion; the second, from his conversion to his call to Geneva; the third embraces his short first pastorate at Geneva; the fourth, his sojourn at Strassburg; and the fifth, his protracted struggles and final triumph at Geneva, closing with his death.

Calvin grew up under the shadow of a great cathedral. His native town, Noyon, owed most of its prosperity to the church, and its bishop was one of the twelve peers of France. To be in favor with the bishop was to be on the side of power; and

this was the good fortune of Calvin's father. He came of a family of boatmen, but resolving to rise in the world, took up legal and administrative work, and attained to a position which made it possible for him to secure for his boys the best education of the day. He changed his original plan of having John become a priest and advised him to study law instead; for the kings of France no longer relied primarily on priests to conduct the affairs of state; they preferred legal specialists. The law was therefore the path to power. In order to support John during his studies, his father procured for him a chaplaincy in the cathedral, which involved no work but gave the boy, then nearly twelve years of age, a small salary. At fourteen he was sent up to Paris to study at the University, and was fortunate in coming under the care of Cordier, the best teacher of Latin in France, who grew interested in him and taught him how to study. At Paris Calvin became one of the best Latin stylists of his century, and also exercised himself in the art of argumentation, for Latin debates were then the rage. Here, too, he made valuable friendships; though himself sprung from the common people, he had been used to associating with the young aristocrats of Noyon, and he made more friends of the same sort at Paris; in consequence he gained the bearing of a gentleman in an age when distinction of manner was ordinarily the monopoly of the nobles.

At the age of eighteen Calvin had completed his general or Arts course, and began his professional education. He heard the leading jurists of the day at Orléans, and later at Bourges, and learned to look at law both as a great body of precedent and as a system of principles. But he did not remain a law student; literature proved too attractive. On his father's death he felt free to follow his philological tastes, and to his Latin and Greek he added Hebrew. In April, 1532, he published his first book, the *Commentary on Seneca's Treatise on Clemency*, an excellent compilation that shows clearness of arrangement and unusual breadth of reading.

Calvin was a diligent student of a high-strung and somewhat nervous type. Conscientious to a fault, and possessed of a phenomenal memory, he might readily have developed into that hopeless type of prodigy which an ancient rabbi praised as a cemented cistern, who lets not a word of his teacher escape; but from such mere traditionalism and bondage to "total recall" Calvin was saved by habits of reflection. A light sleeper, he spent his hours of wakefulness in going over what he had heard, and in assimilating his great store of material. Thus he was guarded against two weaknesses of ordinary man; on the one hand he was never swamped by his facts, on the other, he rarely theorized on insufficient data. His mind was clear and cogent. Had he given himself to either literature or law, he would have surely found distinction in those fields as he did in that of theology; an overpowering religious impulse, however, upset his calculations. Out of the shipwreck of family and personal ambition came the clear call to the service of God.

His conversion, which ushers in the second period of his career, took place when he was about twenty-four years of age. The precise date and manner of the great change are uncertain, and many theories have been advanced concerning the way in which religion first grasped him. Calvin was more or less reticent, and his utterances are too fragmentary to support any elaborate hypothesis; yet the fundamental features of his experience are plain. Conversion was to him a sudden, surprising and fairly definite experience. The intellectual factor was prominent: believing that man should do the will of God, he became convinced that the will of God could become known through the Bible solely. As he himself said, he had been "obstinately addicted to the superstitions of the Papacy"; now, the authority of popes and councils was swept away: it became clear to him that there was no authority in the world worth anything save Holy Scripture. This conviction became fundamental in his theology: the young humanist dedicated

himself forthwith to the religion which he found in his Bible. To the naturally shy and retiring scholar, who always aimed at "living privately without being known," there came a new and disturbing call. "God," said Calvin some years later, "has never let me rest in any place whatever, but in spite of my natural disposition, He has brought me forth into the light, and, as the saying is, has thrust me onto the stage." About a year after Calvin's conversion, a friend of his, who had just been elected rector of the University of Paris, made a courageous but untimely speech on behalf of the liberal or humanistic wing of the Roman Catholic theology. The conservatives became aroused, the cry of heresy was raised, and Calvin, like many others, had to seek safety in flight. He took refuge with a friend at Angoulême, in Southwestern France, and was able to spend some time in quiet study and in clarifying his ideas. He desired especially to write a short handbook of Christian doctrine; but a still more pressing task was to decide what attitude he should take toward the Church of Rome. He had lived for years on his ecclesiastical incomes, though he had never been ordained; he was now twenty-five, and must choose between ordination in the Roman Church, a course which would mean for him enlistment among the quiet reformers within that church, or he must resign his benefices and face poverty, exile and possibly death. His loyalty to the Bible seemed to him to permit of no compromise and he resigned his benefices. He preferred truth to wealth, exile to dishonest conformity.

Soon France became too hot for him, and he fled to Switzerland. Basel, where he took up his abode, was at that time one of the chief literary centres of Europe. Erasmus had made it his headquarters, and the printers of Basel vied with those of Mainz and Lyons in supplying the book trade. Here Calvin, though living in concealment, made a few important friendships, notably with Bullinger, Zwingli's youthful successor at Zurich. Besides studying Hebrew, he got out the first edition

of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, an epoch-making work, to which he prefaced a masterly letter to King Francis I, defending the French Protestants against the charge of sedition. This bold epistle prefixed to the clearest handbook of Protestant doctrine which had thus far appeared, made the author at once the recognized head of the Protestant movement in his native land.

After the *Institutes* were published, Calvin took advantage of a lull in the persecution to make a flying visit to Paris. A war made it necessary for him to return to Basel not by the direct route, but to take the roundabout way through Geneva. He expected to pass but a single night in that city, but Farel, the Protestant minister of the town, adjured him in the name of God to stay. The adjuration held him fast, and determined his subsequent history.

Calvin's first pastorate at Geneva (1536-1538) forms the third period of his life. For a generation this city had been on the firing line. It is now Swiss; but lying in the ancient Burgundian territory, it then acted as a buffer state between France, Savoy, and what may be called Switzerland proper. It had recently thrown off the rule of its bishop, and had established a fairly democratic municipal government. The new city council had introduced the Reformation, and had entrusted the leadership of ecclesiastical affairs to Farel, able as an agitator, but lacking in constructive ability. In enlisting the help of Calvin, Farel instinctively supplemented his own deficiencies. At first he made Calvin merely his personal assistant, but soon the intellect of the assistant began to dominate the entire town. Calvin prepared a scheme for governing the church, and a catechism, and with the aid of Farel compiled a confession of faith. The plan of government embodied a rigorous system of church discipline, and was designed to exclude those of unworthy life from participation in the Lord's Supper; the catechism was meant to insure to the children efficient religious instruction; the creed, prepared

with a view to securing general agreement on the fundamentals of Christianity, was one which all citizens of Geneva were to be brought together in groups to sign, in order to separate the goats from the sheep, the partisans of the Pope from the adherents of the Gospel.

While these schemes were under discussion, Calvin was violently accused of rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity. It seems that he did not believe that the Athanasian creed was scriptural, and he refused pointblank to accept it. Furthermore, Calvin had omitted the terms "Trinity" and "Person" from his new catechism, believing that these expressions were so technical as to be out of place in a popular manual. But he was nevertheless able to point to his *Institutes*, where he had used the traditional terms along with some phraseology from the Athanasian creed. The accusation of Antitrinitarianism was thus shown to be groundless; but Calvin always remained peculiarly sensitive on this point, and later he showed his zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity in the lamentable incident of Servetus.

Cleared of the charge of heresy, Calvin proceeded to push his reforms. He met with determined opposition, and with minor reverses; for instance, as to the frequency of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Personally, Calvin would have preferred to have it come once a week, but cautiously proposed that it come once a month; whereat the council stiffly decreed that it should be held once in three months. More ominous than such civil refusals were the mutterings of discontent over the enforcement of unusually strict church discipline. Accustomed as were the citizens of mediæval towns to minute municipal regulations as to what they should eat or wear, the ardor of Calvin and his associates for the detailed improvement of public morals galled the Genevans. Out of the bickerings there emerged a fundamental issue: should the power of excommunication reside in Calvin's board of ministers, or in the city council? Calvin on the one hand was convinced that

the only way to enforce the Christian standard of life over against the tendency to compromise with evil was for the ministers to excommunicate without asking the leave of local politicians; on the other hand, a strong party believed that Calvin's plan gave too much power to the clergy, and preferred the arrangement in force at Berne, Geneva's most important neighbor to the East, where the power of discipline was lodged in the municipal council. As Calvin's plan tended to lessen the ecclesiastical influence of Berne over Geneva, when the Bernese party obtained control of the city council he was forced into exile. With this defeat ended the third period of his life, the first residence at Geneva.

The three years of exile which followed, spent at Strassburg, form the fourth period of Calvin's life. Though the fight with poverty was bitter, he was able to eké out a livelihood, and even to marry. His wife was the widow of an Anabaptist whom he had converted to his own way of thinking. Though she took good care of him, she never entered much into his inner life. Their only child, a son, died in infancy, and after that the mother was broken in health. When she herself died, several years later, Calvin wrote to an intimate friend: "I have been bereaved of the best companion of my life, who, if our lot had been harsher, would have been not only the willing sharer of exile and poverty, but even of death. While she lived, she was the faithful helper of my ministry. From her I never experienced the slightest hindrance." Though not one of the lyric love-matches of history, Calvin's marriage had at least the romance of sharing privation, danger and the peril of death; and the woman who marries an arch-heretic, however quiet her character, needs the courage of a true saint.

Besides matrimony, the three eventful years at Strassburg brought Calvin a wider experience of life. He had time to reflect on the logic of his position, he clarified his views, and rewrote the *Institutes*. His literary activity made him a noted

figure in the German Reformation; he was respected by the Strassburg leaders, and was drawn into some of the great public discussions by means of which the Emperor Charles V was endeavoring to reconcile the Protestants and the Catholics. Thus we find him at the Colloquies of Hagenau, Worms, and Regensburg. Here he had the chance of seeing and hearing the great leaders on both sides, all save Luther, whom the Emperor refused to invite. To become intimate with Martin Bucer and Melanchthon was alone worth the price of exile. When in 1541 Calvin was recalled to Geneva, he was riper in experience, clearer in his purposes, recognized throughout Europe as the most promising of the French-speaking Protestants. The most promising, merely: for great as were his achievements, he was still a young man of thirty-two.

The fifth and final epoch of Calvin's career extends from his return to Geneva to his death in 1564. It forms a period of twenty-three strenuous years, of which the first fourteen were full of dramatic conflicts, the last nine given to the peaceful utilization of victory.

His recall was brought about by several causes. The Bernese party in Geneva lost control of the city government, the ministers who had taken Calvin's place proved unable to cope with the ecclesiastical situation, and men longed for his resourceful leadership. He returned unwillingly and from a sense of duty: for he knew that trials awaited him. He shrank from the ordeal; he wrote to a friend that he would rather endure "a hundred other deaths than that cross." When pressed to accept he wrote the same friend: "If I were given the choice, I would do anything rather than yield to you in this matter; but since I remember that I am not my own, I offer my heart as if slain in sacrifice to the Lord."

Calvin did not, then, treat his recall as a personal triumph; he chose simply to act as if he had never been banished. His opening sermon was awaited eagerly; but instead of attacking his enemies, he contented himself with taking up the exposition

of the Bible at the very point where he had dropped it three years before. This was certainly great self-restraint in one who was by nature nervous and impatient, a tendency nourished in his case as in Carlyle's by chronic dyspepsia. But he took himself in hand,—and then proceeded to take Geneva in hand.

The crucial question remained, as before, that of church discipline. Should the board of pastors be allowed to excommunicate citizens on their own initiative and responsibility, or should this power be lodged in the city council? Calvin, jealous for the purity of church-membership, finally carried the day. By his *Ordinances* he established a system which meant that every citizen of Geneva had either to submit to a compulsory training in the will of God or leave town. He believed that the Scriptures contained a definite rule of faith and practice, and he endeavored to enforce that rule for the glory of God. Thus was established the prototype and parent of the long line of Puritan theocracies, instinct with that zeal which had consumed leaders as diverse as Moses, Elijah, and Hildebrand. Calvin did not attempt to govern Geneva himself, but he insisted that the magistrates should execute the divine will. He was merely John Calvin, a pastor and teacher of theology; his authority was based on the fact that he, the greatest student of Scripture that the age had produced, was therefore the court of last resort on questions as to that will. To challenge his interpretation of the Bible seemed to him not merely dangerous but presumptuous, and his reputation for hardness of heart arises very largely from his treatment of those who, to his mind, attempted to wrest the oracles of God.

The celebrated case is that of the Spanish physician Servetus. When about twenty years of age this restless son of the Renaissance had published a crudely youthful attack on the doctrine of the Trinity. He did not mean to be irreverent in treating his high theme, yet to his contemporaries his language sounded blasphemous. Calvin had some

correspondence with him, and in the endeavor to improve his theology sent him a copy of the *Institutes*. Servetus scribbled contemptuous comments on the margin of the book and sent it back. Thenceforward Calvin was convinced that the Spaniard was an obstinate heretic, a blasphemer of the God-head, who, according to the Mosaic law should not be permitted to live. He bided his time till one day some years later, when Servetus imprudently passed through Geneva. Chancing to discover the presence of the heretic, Calvin had him arrested, just as anyone who feels responsible for the public welfare might see to it that a miscreant is brought to justice. The Genevan courts convicted Servetus of holding unorthodox views, as he undoubtedly did, and in accordance with the laws of the day, condemned him to be burned at the stake. Calvin mercifully endeavored to have the sentence commuted to execution by the sword, but the zealous magistrates refused to favor so notorious an offender and Servetus died by fire: a martyr to the intolerance of his age.

The execution of Servetus is now held to be the chief stain on Calvin's character. Yet at the time it was considered to be very much to his credit that he had rid the world of a monster of impiety, and that he had saved the Calvinistic movement from the reproach of the Antitrinitarian heresy. If we are to judge him by the standards of his contemporaries, the utmost we can say against him is that he was perhaps over-zealous in hunting down a criminal. Let us therefore, while disowning and repudiating his intolerant ideas, do him at least historic justice. When in 1903 an expiatory monument was erected to Servetus, the first on the list of subscribers was the Calvinistic consistory of the church of Geneva. Thus far has the world moved toward brotherhood since Calvin's time: and this very progress is due in large measure to forces which Calvin organized.

Before Protestantism arose, Western Europe lay under the power of the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The Roman Church

championed what is called Unity of the Faith, a fine phrase, which meant that in religious matters all citizens of a given state must think alike, and that heresy and dissent must be crushed remorselessly. In breaking up this international league of intolerance, no force was more potent than Calvinism, itself at first intolerant to the core. After Luther's death the Protestant movement was in danger of going to pieces; it was split up into various small state churches, and lacked able leaders. At this juncture the Church of Rome was reorganizing itself on the basis of the Council of Trent, and was passing over from the defensive to the offensive. For seventy years, from 1580 on, Catholicism led by the Jesuits was gaining territory at almost every point in Germany and Austria where it confronted Lutheranism. The Lutherans seemed unable to check the progress of the Catholic Reaction throughout Europe.

What Lutheranism could not do, Calvinism accomplished: by its successful resistance to Roman emissaries, and by its own incurable tendency to convert the "Papists," it not merely held its own, but actually gained ground. Of all the Protestants Calvin was the most feared at Rome, because his theology was so clear and definite, his interpretation of Scripture so masterly, his personal character so lofty and free from reproach. His followers, moreover, were not disorganized and divided, as were those of Luther. They had a definite plan of campaign, namely, to convert Europe to the system of theology which Calvin had discovered in Scripture. They had also a moral program, which they burned to realize, namely, to reorganize the church and the world in accordance with the revealed Word of God. Each local church was to do its part in keeping pure the moral standards of the community in which it was set; and the local churches were not to regard themselves as independent units, but as coöperating parts of a world-wide church organized in national groups. To this universal church Christ had promised victory; and this hope was

made more tangible by means of the doctrine of predestination. The common man was taught that he was called of God to lead a holy life; and that those whom God had chosen unto himself He would never let perish. The Calvinist has often been ridiculed as one who thought himself the favorite child of the Almighty; but in this very confidence was his strength. With God on his side, he felt he was not fighting alone. Though the Jesuit general at Rome might use the most refined and subtle stratagems to accomplish his world-wide schemes of reaction, coördinating in his hand the policies of the Catholic monarchs who then dominated Europe, throwing his outposts into the wildernesses of Canada, the jungles of India, and the palaces of Peking, still, to the Puritan, such machination seemed bound in the Providence of God to come to naught. The plainest Calvinistic tinker in the North of England felt himself to be the agent of a far greater general than the Black Pope, namely, the Lord God of Hosts, who was directing his every act and in His own good time would make bare His holy arm before the nations. In this confidence of ultimate victory, hundreds of thousands of Protestants died for their faith. Thus it was Calvinism which made it possible for the French Huguenots, after a bloody series of wars, to win toleration in France. It was Calvinism which nerved the Dutch in their desperate struggle to shake off the yoke of Spain with its hated Inquisition. It was Calvinism incarnated in John Knox which broke the power of tyranny in Scotland, and gave us the greatest of the Presbyterian national churches. It was Calvinism which in Cromwell and his Ironsides thwarted Stuart absolutism and kept England free and Protestant. And finally, it was predominantly Calvinism which begat in the hearts of our forefathers the conviction that America should bow before no king save God. Early Virginia was ruled by Puritans, who remained true to the English Church. New England was founded by disciples of Calvin and admirers of his ecclesiastical polity; men who sought the wilderness in order to make

bloom there the red rose of freedom. The best blood of South Carolina was Huguenot, and the great city under whose shadow we stand was founded by the Calvinistic Dutch. Its first settlers came from Holland, then the most tolerant state in Europe: yet the early struggles on this island between the Reformed and the Lutherans show how far the inhabitants of New Amsterdam still were from sympathy with dissenters. Our present America owes much to the Quaker, with his gospel of toleration, to the Anglican, with his emphasis on comprehension and sweet reasonableness, to the Methodist, with his message of the might of regenerate manhood, and to the Catholic, with his insistence on order, efficiency, and unity. But great as are the contributions of each of the many religious groups which have poured their life-blood into America, that which seems to us reddest and fullest of iron is the old Calvinistic strain. The ideal for which this Seminary stands we can trace back in large measure to Geneva; and the realization of the Kingdom of God on earth, to which we would consecrate ourselves, is but the modern way of phrasing that zeal for doing the will of God for which John Calvin was at all times ready to lay down his life.

II.

CALVIN'S INFLUENCE UPON THEOLOGY.

PROFESSOR WILLIAM ADAMS BROWN, PH.D., D.D.

It is difficult to say anything original about Calvin. Serene and imperturbable he looks down upon us from his niche in the world's hall of fame, indifferent alike to our praise and blame. A man whom it is difficult to love, easy to hate, impossible not to respect, he is one of the little company who have wrought their personality not only into the ideas of mankind, but, what is rarer and more difficult, into their institutions. Whatever changes the future may bring, his title to greatness is secure.

Our interest at present is primarily with Calvin's contribution to thought. I am to speak to you of his influence upon theology, but here again I realize how difficult it is to say anything that is new. There are certain great thinkers whose systems it is possible to approach in the spirit of the explorer, conscious as one turns each page, of the chance of some new discovery; but with Calvin it is not so. What he believed and what he taught has long been matter of common knowledge.* Questions of detail may remain uncertain, as to the time of his conversion, as to the nature of the influences which produced it, as to the source of this or that specific element in his system; the essential points are clear. The most that I can hope to do is to put these old facts in their relation to a larger environment, and so bring out in clearer relief and bolder perspective the real meaning of the event which we celebrate

* It is worthy of note that we have no great commentary on Calvin's theology, similar to the elaborate monographs of Koestlin on Luther and of Baur on Zwingli. The reason is a very simple one. Calvin is his own commentator. To learn Luther's theology you have to glean it from many different and often inconsistent statements, and the same is true, though to a less degree, of Zwingli. Neither of these leaders has given his thought complete and final form as Calvin has done in the *Institutes*. The commentary which, in their case, is therefore necessary, is in his largely superfluous.

to-day, and the permanent contribution of the man, whose birth we commemorate, to the ideal interests which are our highest concern.

I have spoken of Calvin's teaching as matter of common knowledge, and yet I am conscious even while I speak that for many persons this is no longer true. The days when children were taught the Westminster Catechism as inevitably as their A B C's has long gone by. The layman who has read the *Institutes* for himself is rare indeed, and even the clergymen who know it at first hand are, I suspect, a limited and ever decreasing company. Under the circumstances, you will pardon me if, at the risk of repeating familiar truths, I remind you for a moment what the Calvinistic system really is.

There are three points of view from which we may approach the study of Calvinism. We may regard it either as a transcript of experience, a philosophy of the world, or a rule of life. Each of these is important, but the first is the most important.

The Calvinistic system is first and foremost the outgrowth of a personal religious experience. It is the experience of men conscious of having been delivered from the guilt and power of sin by the free grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. It is an experience of illumination, bringing with it new insight into truth; of peace, imparting to the penitent the assurance of forgiveness; but, above all, of power, carrying with it the promise of victory over sin and of ultimate transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This experience, signally illustrated in the lives of such men as Paul, Augustine, Luther and Calvin himself, the Calvinistic system assumes as typical, and, by its presence or absence, judges the character and destiny of all mankind.

This generalization is, in turn, justified by a theory of the world. According to this theory, God, the infinite, all-wise creator, made man in his own image, endued him with power to preserve this likeness by his fidelity, or to forfeit it by his

fall, and threatened him in the latter case with eternal punishment, both for himself and for his descendants. Our first parents failed to stand the test, and by their sin, corruption and guilt passed to all the human race. But God, who is infinitely gracious, unwilling to leave man to destruction, determined to redeem a certain number and, to that end, sent Jesus Christ, his only son, to die on the cross for their sins, and, through his Holy Spirit, continually imparts the benefits of his redemption to the elect in regenerating, justifying and sanctifying grace. The remainder of the race he passes over to the destruction which is the just punishment of their sin, imparting to them only such portions of his grace as may be necessary to make the world tolerable for the elect. The whole process, both of salvation and of preterition, takes place according to the good pleasure of God, and is at all points under his control. Yet, in such way that he is in no sense the author of sin, nor is the liberty or responsibility of the creature impaired by his sovereignty.

On the basis of this philosophy and of this experience Calvinism erects its ethical system. Its goal is the utter submission of man's will to the will of God, his gracious Redeemer, and his complete conformity in character and conduct to the rule which God has revealed. This rule is set forth in the Holy Scripture, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and hence the test by which all traditions of men, however ancient and venerable, must be judged. The Scripture not only reveals the law of individual conduct, but the principles of man's social relationships and, above all, the nature and ordinances of the church which God has appointed to be the training school of his elect, and membership in which is, under ordinary circumstances, essential to salvation.

Such, in briefest outline, is the system we call Calvinism, and it is my purpose in what follows to ask what was Calvin's relation to this system and, in particular, what were the qualities on which his greatness as a theologian depends.

It is generally admitted to-day that Calvin was not, in the same sense as Luther, or even as Zwingli, an original thinker. No great break in the history of human thought dates from him. He belonged to the second generation of reformers, building up the majestic structure of his thought out of materials which he found ready to his hand. Much labor has recently been given to the analysis of these materials, and many scholars, English, American, French and German, have separated them into their groups and labelled them according to the quarry from which they were digged. In the light of this research we see more clearly than was once possible how much Calvin's theology has in common with the systems of the Roman divines, with which we are accustomed to contrast it. The bitter polemic of Calvin against Scotus, like the modern Ritschlian polemic against mysticism, is, as so often, but the attempt to hide the consciousness of a half-suspected kinship. The definition of sovereignty in terms of arbitrary will, of authority in terms of inerrancy, of sin in terms of a semi-physical corruption of nature, of salvation as remission of penalty on the basis of a substitutionary atonement, of the Church as the guardian of a uniform law requiring conformity by means of a discipline reinforced by the arm of the state:—all of these, as well as his doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ, are taken over by Calvin from the mother church, and are only in part affected by the new spirit to which Luther had given voice.

This broad foundation in the past explains the courage with which Calvin undertook his reforming work, and the steadfastness with which he held fast to his position under attack. He was confident that he represented not only the spirit of the new age, of which he was spokesman, but the best of the old as well. He cites Augustine, Bernard and Aquinas as witnesses, as well as Isaiah and St. Paul.* As one reads the

* It is interesting to note, however, that while Calvin shows his acquaintance with the works of the later schoolmen, he uses their authority sparingly. It is Augustine in whose writings he finds himself most at home and to whom he continually recurs.

Institutes, one gets the impression of the trained scholar, master of his materials, ready, like the scribe in Jesus' parable, to bring forth out of his treasury things old as well as new.

Yet he is not the scholar merely, but the statesman as well. The author of the *Institutes* impresses us less as the thinker than as the man of affairs; open, alert of mind, living in his own day, and keenly sensitive to its interests, able to speak to its present necessities and to utter his convictions in language which those who hear can understand.

This brings me to the first point in Calvin's title to greatness as a thinker; I mean, his skill as a simplifier of theology. Theologians who have been able to deliver their message in simple and intelligible terms have been rare. This power Calvin possessed in supreme degree. Before his day doctrine had been the affair of the specialist. He made it the common interest of the man on the street. He translated its elaborate formularies into plain speech which the man without technical training could understand, and what is more important, he simplified the ideas to which the words correspond. He cleared away a vast mass of accumulated rubbish, interesting only to the antiquarian, and he put the points that remained in their logical relation as parts of a consistent and coherent system. He grounded each in the Bible, the common textbook of religion, which the Reformation had reclaimed from its obscurity, and put into the hands of all the people. Above all, he showed the practical bearing of each truth upon personal life and pointed out its appropriate fruit in practice. Thus, he made theology, for the first time in its history, a popular study, the concern of the layman as well as of the minister, and so set the ideal which, in theory at least, has ever since been dominant in Protestantism. This is his great and enduring title to fame.

Calvin was not, indeed, the only Protestant teacher who attempted such simplification of doctrine. The ideal of all the reformers was a theology which should represent the common

conviction of all intelligent Christians. Melancthon's *Loci*, the first text-book of Protestant dogmatics, was designed as a popular guide to the understanding of the Scriptures, and, in its first edition, contained those doctrines only which bore directly upon practice and admitted of experimental verification. Luther himself was past master in the art of translating religious truths into the vernacular of common life. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it was in the Calvinistic churches rather than in the Lutheran that lay interest in theology was keenest, and lay understanding of the questions at issue most intelligent. In the Lutheran church theology speedily became the affair of the pastors and professors, and the preacher was content to deal with the simple pieties and homely duties which, however much they might satisfy the heart and appeal to the conscience, made slight demands upon the understanding. But doctrine remained for generations the staple of Calvinistic preaching, and the sermon-taster of the modern Scotch novelist is but the last survivor of a race of lay theologians which includes Cromwell's Ironsides and the pilgrims of Plymouth Rock. For the creation and maintenance of this widespread interest in doctrine Calvin's *Institutes* was largely responsible.

No doubt, this great achievement is in part accounted for by the purpose for which the book was originally written. This purpose was the defence of his persecuted fellow Protestants before the bar of public opinion. "My reason," he tells us, "for publishing the *Institutes* was, first, that I might vindicate from unjust affront my brethren whose death was precious in the sight of the Lord, and, next, that some sorrow and anxiety should move foreign peoples, since the same sufferings threaten many. Neither was it that thick and elaborate work it is now, but only a little handbook that then appeared, nor had it any other aim than to witness to the faith of those whom I saw reviled by impious and faithless flatterers."* Men on trial for their life have no words to

* Walker: John Calvin, N. Y., 1906, p. 131.

waste in empty rhetoric, or display of learning. They speak simply, directly and to the point, for their purpose is to persuade. It is in this spirit that the author of the *Institutes* took up his pen, and the audience that he addressed was not a little band of scholars, but the entire French nation with their monarch at their head.

None the less, it was an extraordinary achievement. To understand its full significance one must compare the *Institutes*, a small handbook of 514 octavo pages,* with the ponderous tomes of the schoolmen which it replaced, and the scarcely less formidable systems of the Protestant scholastics which followed it. It is true that with later revisions the book grew in bulk till it assumed the form in which we know it to-day, three substantial octavo volumes, of which two deal with the subject matter of theology proper, and the third with the application of these principles to the doctrine of the church. But the character of the system remains substantially unchanged by the later additions.† When we remember that at the time Calvin put forth the first edition of the *Institutes* he was but twenty-seven years of age, we realize how rare must have been the genius that could so surely have grasped and so securely have developed the essential points upon which the later Protestantism was to base its defence against Rome.‡

This organizing genius is the more remarkable because of Calvin's interest in the interpretation of Scripture. The interest of the exegete and of the systematic theologian is very

* The contents of the first edition are interesting. It consists of six sections, the first dealing with the law, the second with faith, the third with prayer, the fourth with the sacraments, the fifth with the false sacraments of the Roman Church, and the last with Christian liberty and the relation of church and state.

† In this the *Institutes* forms a marked contrast to Melancthon's *Loci*, the first dogmatic text-book of Protestantism. In the first edition of his *Loci* Melancthon omits altogether the doctrines of the Trinity and the Person of Christ, confining himself to those matters which, in his opinion, could be verified in the personal Christian experience. The omission is supplied in later editions, and the change radically alters the character of the book.

‡ Cf. on this subject Professor Warfield's elaborate article on Calvin's apologetic in the *Princeton Review*, 1909.

different, and it is not often that a single man excels in both fields. Calvin combined critical insight and constructive power in unusual degree. As is well known, he was an admirable exegete, and to this day his commentaries retain a permanent value for the interpreter of Scripture. But he was theologian first, and exegete second, and he never allowed his interest in questions of detail to divert him from his main purpose,—the clear statement of the central truths of the Gospel, as he understood them.*

A second title to Calvin's greatness as a theologian is his clear perception of the intimate relation between doctrine and life. Among the saints of pragmatism Calvin might well hold an honorable place. "The duty of a theologian," he tells us,† "is not to tickle the ear but to confirm the conscience by teaching what is true, certain and useful." From first to last, theology is to him the systematic expression of those convictions which inspire and regulate conduct. This is true of all doctrines, without exception. "By the knowledge of God," he says, "I understand that by which we not only conceive that there is some God, but also apprehend what it is for our interest, and conducive to his glory, what, in short, it is befitting to know concerning him. For, properly speaking, we cannot say that God is known where there is no religion or piety. . . . Hence, it is obvious that in seeking God

* As an example of Calvin's method, cf. his treatment of the divine attributes in Bk. I, ch. 10, sec. 2 (Vol. I, p. 116, ed. Calv. Tr. Soc.), a model of conciseness and clearness: "Not to collect a great number of passages," he says, "it may suffice at present to refer to one Psalm, 145, in which a summary of the divine perfections is so carefully given that not one seems to have been omitted." The same is true of his treatment of creation, Bk. I, ch. 14, sec. 21 (p. 211). Such sentences as the following, Bk. I, ch. 7, sec. 1 (Vol. I, p. 90), are of frequent occurrence: "This subject well deserves to be treated more at large and pondered more accurately, but my readers will pardon me for having more regard to what my plan admits than to what the extent of this topic requires."

In this respect there is a marked contrast between Calvin and another great theologian, who was a frequent student and great admirer of the *Institutes*—I mean Ritschl. Had the latter been able to resist the temptation to digression, against which Calvin so rigorously sets his face, the study of Ritschl's theology would be a much simpler and more inviting matter than it is.

† Bk. I, ch. 14, sec. 4 (Vol. I, p. 194).

the most direct path and the fittest method is not to attempt with presumptuous curiosity to pry into his essence, which is rather to be adored than minutely discussed, but to contemplate him in his works, by which he draws near, becomes familiar, and in a manner communicates himself to us."* If he takes over from the older creeds the doctrine of the Trinity, it is because he is convinced that it is necessary to safeguard the deity of Christ, upon which man's salvation depends. He has little interest in the speculations of the philosophers as to the inner mysteries of the divine being. He does not care to discuss the relation between the substance and the persons that compose it, or the nature of the mysterious distinctions which separate each of these from the other,—questions which, in the past, have given rise to such endless controversy. He would gladly banish the very terms which have been used to describe them, if he knew how to express his faith without their use.† But the faith must be maintained at any cost, for it concerns the God with whom we have to do in personal experience, the God who on Calvary has borne in his own person the burden of our sins, and who through his present Spirit creates within us the new man who is being daily renewed in knowledge and righteousness.

This practical interest appears in connection with his controversy with Servetus. One feels as one re-reads the records of this famous case that the arguments used on either side do not correctly represent the real question at issue. To Calvin, Servetus is the representative of an irreverent criticism which, had it triumphed, would have involved the destruction of all that he held dear. In denying the accepted doctrine of the Trinity, this "impiety," as he designated the Spanish heresy, broke with the past at the very point where the French

* Bk. I, ch. 2, sec. 1 (Vol. I, p. 51); Bk. I, ch. 5, sec. 9 (Vol. I, pp. 74, 75).

† "I am not so minutely precise," he tells us, "as to fight furiously for mere words, for I observe that the writers of the ancient church, while they uniformly spoke with great reverence on these matters, neither agreed with each other, or were always consistent with themselves" (Bk. I, ch. 13, sec. 5, (Vol. I, p. 151); Cf. also pp. 149, 168, 187. A similar reserve appears in his treatment of the doctrine of angels and of the devil. (Cf. pp. 193, 205, 226.)

Reformer was most anxious to maintain his own continuity with it. Victory here was essential to the triumph of the practical interests to which he was committed, and, however much he may have regretted the price which had to be paid to secure it, he did not falter for an instant. On the whole, the best public opinion of his time sustained him, and the fact that to us to-day his conduct seems so indefensible is the best measure of the extent to which we have moved from the principles which were then everywhere regarded as axiomatic.

Nowhere does this practical interest appear more clearly than in that doctrine which has been made the subject of the most severe criticism—I mean that of reprobation. Calvin holds this doctrine because it seems to him essentially involved in the fact of the divine sovereignty, which is his deepest personal conviction. Engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with men seeking to destroy the truth, he asks himself how they have acquired such power, and he finds his answer in the divine will. God, for his own wise purpose, that he may magnify his justice as well as his mercy, has granted to wicked men a temporary ascendancy, only that he may destroy them in the end. In this conviction he finds assurance and peace. For only if God controls all things without exception can we be sure that no harm can come to the man who puts his trust in him. This practical interest dominates Calvin's entire treatment of the doctrine. He is insistent in his warning against idle speculation. It is enough to know "that the will of God is the supreme rule of righteousness, so that everything which he wills must be held to be righteous, by the mere fact of his willing it. Therefore, when it is asked why the Lord did so, we must answer, because he pleased, but, if you proceed further to ask why he pleased, you ask for something greater and more sublime than the will of God, and nothing such can be found. Let human temerity, then, be quiet and cease to inquire after what exists not, lest perhaps it fails to

find what does exist.”* This is not the language of philosophy, but of religion.

Opponents of the Calvinistic system have often referred to the paralyzing effect which the doctrine of divine sovereignty must have upon the human will. This was not the effect which it had upon the will of Calvin. In the first book of the *Institutes* there is a discussion of the use to be made of the doctrine of providence, which sheds so significant a light upon the character of the author that I cannot forbear giving a brief quotation. After speaking of the Christian's recognition of the fact that there is no single event which is beyond the control of the divine will, he goes on to say that “at the same time the Christian will not overlook inferior causes. . . . Regarding all the aids which the creatures can lend him, as hands offered him by the Lord, he will avail himself of them as the legitimate instruments of Divine Providence. And as he is uncertain what the result of any business in which he engages is to be (save that he knows, that in all things the Lord will provide for his good), he will zealously aim at what he deems for the best, so far as his abilities enable him.” (Bk. I, ch. 17, sec. 9, Vol. I, pp. 259 sq.)†

* Bk. III, ch. 23, sec. 2 (Vol. II, p. 562).

† The whole passage is instructive. “For, while he (that is, the Christian) regards those by whom he is benefited as ministers of the divine goodness, he will not, therefore, pass them by, as if their kindness deserved no gratitude, but feeling sincerely obliged to them, will willingly confess the obligation, and endeavor, according to his ability, to return it. In fine, in the blessings which he receives, he will revere and extol God as the principal author, but will also honour men as his ministers, and perceive, as is the truth, that by the will of God he is under obligation to those, by whose hand God has been pleased to show him kindness. If he sustains any loss through negligence, or imprudence, he will, indeed, believe that it was the Lord's will that it should so be, but, at the same time, he will impute it to himself. If one for whom it was his duty to care, but whom he has treated with neglect, is carried off by disease, although aware that the person had reached a limit beyond which it was impossible to pass, he will not, therefore, extenuate his fault, but, as he had neglected to do his duty faithfully towards him, will feel as if he had perished by his guilty negligence. Far less where, in the case of theft or murder, fraud and preconceived malice have existed, will he palliate it under the pretext of Divine Providence, but in the same crime will distinctly recognize the justice of God, and the iniquity of man, as each is separately manifested. But in future events, especially, will he take account of such inferior causes. If he is not left destitute of human aid, which he can employ for his safety, he will set it down as a divine blessing; but he will not, therefore, be remiss in taking measures, or slow in employing the help of those whom he sees

No one who is acquainted with the life of Calvin can doubt that these sentences give a truthful description of his own character. Certainly he was a man who, so far as his abilities enabled him, zealously aimed at what he deemed for the best.

This clear perception of the practical significance of doctrine has been characteristic of Calvinism through all its later history. Its theology was one which could be preached, and which was preached from beginning to end, and no preacher would have felt that he had done his full duty to his congregation if he had not pointed out the practical application of the truth in question to the lives of his hearers.

I had occasion recently to read a monograph on the doctrine of the covenants by Peter Bulkley, printed at London in 1645, while the Westminster Assembly was still in session. The author states in his preface that the book consists of a series of sermons which he had preached a few years before to his congregation at Concord, in New England, he having come in the course of his orderly survey of Christian theology to this particular *locus* in the dogmatic system. The case is typical. The theology of the Puritans—the English Calvinists—was largely developed in sermon form.

How sincerely the hearers took the preaching to heart, even in the case of doctrines which have largely lost their familiarity to-day, I may illustrate by a single example. Among Cromwell's letters, contained in Carlyle's classic edition, there is one directed to his son-in-law, General Fleetwood, then Lord Deputy of Ireland. It is dated, Whitehall, June 22nd, 1655, two years after the dismissal of the famous Rump Parliament. After treating of various matters of business, the writer, then ruler of one of the most powerful

possessed of the means of assisting him. . . . In adopting his measures, he will not be carried away by his own impressions, but will commit and resign himself to the wisdom of God, that under his guidance he may be led into the right path. However, his confidence in external aid will not be such that the presence of it will make him feel secure, the absence of it fill him with dismay, as if he were destitute. His mind will always be fixed on the Providence of God alone, and no consideration of present circumstances will be allowed to withdraw him from the steady contemplation of it."

nations in the world, and bearing upon his shoulders burdens of responsibility that would have crushed any but the strongest man, concludes as follows:

“Dear Charles, my dear love to thee; and to my dear Biddy—(his daughter)—who is a joy to my heart, for what I hear of the Lord in her. Bid her be cheerful, and rejoice in the Lord once and again: If she knows the Covenant, she cannot but do so. For that transaction is without *her*; sure and stedfast, between the Father and the Mediator in His blood: therefore, leaning upon the Son, or looking to Him, thirsting after Him, and embracing Him, we are His Seed;—and the Covenant is sure to all the Seed. The Compact is for the Seed: God is bound in faithfulness to Christ, and in Him to us: the Covenant is without us; a Transaction between God and Christ. Look up to *it*. God engageth in it to pardon us; to write His Law in our heart; to plant His fear so that we shall never depart from Him. We, under all our sins and infirmities, can daily offer a perfect Christ; and thus we have peace and safety, and apprehension of love, from a Father in Covenant,—who cannot deny Himself. And truly in this is all my salvation; and this helps me to bear my great burdens.”

This reference to Cromwell suggests the third and last point in Calvin's contribution to theology, of which I shall have time to speak. I mean his clear perception of its social outcome.

In Froude's famous essay on Calvinism, after passing in review the various unfavorable opinions which have been passed upon this system by its opponents, he asks the pertinent question: “How it came to pass that if Calvinism is indeed the hard and unreasonable creed which modern enlightenment declares it to be, it has possessed such singular attractions in past times for some of the greatest men that ever lived, and how is it that being, as we are told, fatal to morality because it denies free will, the first symptom of its operation wherever

it established itself was to obliterate the distinction between sins and crimes, and to make the moral law the rule of life for states as well as persons."*

In part, this question has already been answered by the quotations which I have given. Calvinism possessed attractions for great men, because it brought them, as they believed, into direct contact with the source of all power; but the answer is not complete until we add that it offered them an end worthy to engage the uttermost energies of men of power. The God whom Calvin worshipped was not Saviour only, but law giver; and the task which he set was not simply the reformation of individual character, but the transformation of society as well. It is not an accident that of the three volumes of the *Institutes* in their finished form a full third should be given to the doctrine of the church; nor can any account of Calvin's achievement be adequate which does not give the place of central importance to the work which he did in erecting in the city of Geneva a form of church government which, reproduced with slight variations in other countries, has formed the model of the most powerful independent churches of the modern world, and which, directly or indirectly, has profoundly affected the course of political as well as of religious history. It is not my part to follow this work in detail. That remains for the speaker who succeeds me. Here I am concerned only to trace this social outcome to its roots in Calvin's theology, and to remind you that it was the union in his system of the conception of an absolute authority with that of a definite social goal, which explains its far-reaching effects in history and accounts for its attraction for statesmen as well as for theologians, for men of action and of affairs, like Coligny and William the Silent, as well as for students and thinkers, like John Milton and Jonathan Edwards.

To us to-day indeed the methods which Calvin used seem arbitrary and unspiritual, the goal which he set an impossible

* Short Studies, II, p. 13.

uniformity, and the result he attained an intolerable tyranny. Other presuppositions dominate our thinking, other ideals give direction to our social effort. We no longer think of the Bible as an inerrant book, issuing complete and perfect from the hand of God, equally valid in all its parts, Old and New Testament alike, for the establishment of doctrine or the enforcement of law. We recognize that God works by slow degrees, that revelation has a history, that the teaching of Jesus has a higher authority than that of the Chronicler or the author of the imprecatory Psalms, or even than that of St. Paul himself.

We are more sensitive too to the evils with which human life abounds, less ready to regard them as ultimate and necessary, less willing to ascribe them to the deliberate will of the God whom we worship, far less content to find in our own good fortune an antidote and compensation for the misery of those who have suffered shipwreck on the sea of life. We have learned from Jesus a different conception of God than that which Calvin held. We think of him not as our Father alone, but as the Father of all mankind, interested in the welfare of each individual, seeking his salvation, not willing that any should perish. It is inevitable that, with such presupposition, we should find much in the Calvinistic system which repels us.

In order to judge its author correctly we must measure him by the standards of his own day, not of ours. We must remember the environment in which he lived, and the work which he attempted to perform. He was confronted, on the one hand, by the Roman church, with its corrupt and selfish hierarchy, claiming absolute authority over the consciences and the lives of men, and ready to go to any lengths to secure the recognition of that authority. On the other side were a number of secular states governed by rulers, many of them equally corrupt and no less selfish, often opposing the church for their own private ends, but ready whenever necessary to

enter into alliance with her if it furthered their interests. In a world divided between two such powers, Calvin undertook to build up a free church and to secure standing ground for its normal expansion and development. This task he actually accomplished, and if, to our more sensitive feeling, there seems to be more of the law than of the gospel in his methods, we must remember that in such an age no less drastic methods would have prevailed, and that to his valiant use of the weapons which God put in his hands we owe the larger liberty which we enjoy to-day.

It is from this point of view that we must answer the question which has recently been proposed, whether Calvin was a reformer or a reactionary, whether he belonged to the old age or to the new. Such a dilemma is necessarily misleading. Every great man belongs to more than one age, and in this fact his greatness consists. In the methods of his reasoning, in the temper of his mind, in many of his specific ideas, Calvin, as we have seen, was in sympathy with the great church in which he was born and under whose nurture he was trained. But, in the rigor with which he submitted her claims to authority to the test of God's Spirit, speaking to his own conscience through the Scripture, and in the courage with which he broke with the organized Christianity of his day when once he was convinced that those claims could not stand the test, he showed himself a Protestant of the Protestants, and we who, in our turn, submit to the test of our own consciences in the light of the new age the system which he has handed down to us, are only walking further along the pathway which he has marked out for his successors.

III.

THE INNER SPIRIT OF THE CALVINISTIC PURITAN STATE.

PROFESSOR THOMAS CUMING HALL, D.D.

Calvin's relation to Puritanism raises the whole interesting question as to the relation of Puritanism to Roman Catholicism. That Puritanism proved one of the bitterest foes of Roman Imperialism needs no detailed argument. Nor can one close one's eyes to the fact that in denying papal supremacy, rejecting a celibate clergy, five of the seven sacraments, the doctrine of purgatory and merit, masses for the dead, the whole monastic system and the exclusive use of a sacred language, the Reformers, both Lutheran and Calvinistic, separated themselves most widely from the popular faith, and that in making a stand at these points for Protestantism, Puritanism became a bulwark against Papal aggression.

Calvin himself stands out in history in too sharp an outline and in too great proportions to make it worth while to praise him for virtues he did not possess, or to blame him for things which were the outcome of his time. There is no excuse for misunderstanding John Calvin—no man is his superior in the clear, forceful use of both Latin and French. He knew his system and he knew its limitations; he was content to live in that system and was almost petulantly impatient of those who blurred its outline.

John Calvin was not primarily a theologian. He had little or no interest in speculative theology as speculative theology. He himself turns distinctly and strongly away from many of the questions with which theology has always occupied herself. His system of theology interested him only because he regarded it as revealed directly from heaven, and as the basis upon which God was building His true church.

On the doctrines of the Trinity, Christology, Soteriology, and, save with the exception of Purgatory, Eschatology, the Council of Trent speaks substantially as the Reformers did, and Calvin accepted this theology. The place of Authority was the real issue. And this gives us the key to Calvin's character and Calvin's service. He gave the world a definite theory of the church as a great fighting machine for the destruction of the papacy and the reconstruction of civil and religious life. Calvin looked out upon a world dark with clouds of disorganization and disruption, and he gave it authoritative organization.

The Reformation was but a religious phase of a great awakening and various phases of the movement mingled and divided human life. Luther had not been able to organize a church strong in her own strength; he had turned to the German princes and left to them the responsibility of this reorganization. As over against disorganized Protestantism, the papal hierarchy with its long traditions, its magnificent organization, its renewed ethical life (since the Councils of Pisa, Constance and Trent) seemed likely to overwhelm the divided and confused forces of the Reformation. It is almost useless to speculate upon what might have happened had naught but Lutheranism stood in the way of the papacy. All we can say is that the Counter-Reformation did sweep Italy, Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, and the southern provinces of Germany and was already threatening both France and Holland. It was then that John Calvin and his work began to make themselves felt in the fortunes of European history.

Calvin is the father of the Puritan State. To understand Calvin one must understand the inner spirit of the Puritan State, and in order to understand the Puritan State one has to turn back to the organizing conceptions of Calvin.

We notice at once as upon the surface the break between John Calvin's organization and the organization of Rome. It was no light thing to defy the papacy, to deny five of the

seven sacraments, to turn away from the sacred language and to break with the whole monastic system. But, after all, these steps had been already taken and at this point Calvin simply caught up the watchwords of the older generation of Reformers. But he took these protests and built them into a definite and tremendously powerful conception of life. He gave them homogeneity, and their place not simply in a theology but in the working theory of statesmen and politicians.

The question that is of vital interest is as to whether the organizing conceptions of the Calvinistic Puritan State are really Protestant, as that word is now used, or not. And on that point something turns on the conception of the inner spirit of Protestantism. It is not fair to Protestantism to judge of it by too narrow phases of its life. There has been steady development of what may be called a non-ecclesiastical Protestantism, which is as much a part of it as its creeds and church leaders. Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Leibnitz, Des Cartes, Hume and Kant are the children of Protestantism in a more real sense than Charlemagne and Charles the Fifth, or Petrarch and Dante, are children of Rome.

What makes Protestantism essentially one is the emphasis placed upon the final appeal to the inner assurance of the individual. Authorities may make their appeal, but the last analysis leaves the soul asserting with increasing emphasis its own moral autonomy. This belongs to the essence of Protestantism from the time of Luther's famous stand at the Diet of Worms up to Kant's almost equally famous philosophic formulation of the principle.

This principle is wrapt up with a truly Protestant estimate of the worth of the individual. Freedom and democracy spring naturally from the assertion of man's inherent moral autonomy. Between the soul and God no priest has a right to come. No Church can do more than lead the soul into the presence chamber; then the child answers in its own name to the Father. The Roman Catholic Church kept its "laymen"

constantly as "Children of Mother Church." A true and self-conscious Protestantism knows no "laymen," all men are Kings and Priests unto God, and only functions separate the various ministries. Although Luther was never consistent, yet it is easy to show that he maintained at all periods of his life with vivid clearness these several positions. Luther went further, however, and made religion so intimate and personal a thing, that its relation as an organized church to the state became of but secondary importance. Nationalism had a strong hold upon Luther's mind and heart. His appeal was to the princes to simply protect the new gospel, and to encourage its growth. He had either no theories of the relation of church to state, or extremely confused notions about it.

As a consequence of this Protestantism was in seemingly grave danger. How real that danger was might be a matter of academic dispute. It is perhaps easy now to overestimate it. At any rate the actual state of Protestantism was disorganized. Tyranny was already at the door. Nationalism in its triumph was in danger of being as tyrannical and unspiritual as international Imperialism had been. It is impossible to say and useless to try and speculate on what would have happened had Germany stood alone against the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation. But it did not stand alone. The actual facts are bad enough, but the waves of the Counter-Reformation broke largely on the rocks of Calvinistic Puritan States founded in France, Switzerland, Holland, Scotland and the distant shores of New England.

It was said of Samuel Adams by one of his relatives that only such hardened tempered steel, polished and sharpened, could have cut through the bond that bound the Colonies to England. And so too, it was only the hardened and tempered steel of a unified Calvinistic system that proved itself capable of cutting the bonds that still bound men to old traditions and held them loyal to the Church at Rome.

It was no accident, perhaps, that the year 1541 saw Ignatius Loyola launch his organization for the conversion of the world to Papal Imperial supremacy, and saw John Calvin reinstated in Geneva to organize a Puritan State which was at last to bid successful defiance in the western world to those imperial ambitions.

Our deep gratitude is due to the man who, in God's providence, did so much to organize the thought and feeling of the Puritan State, and justice to his memory brings us now together to consider and honor John Calvin. The greatness of the man and his service none should deny.

All this, however, should not blind us to the facts that lie on the very surface of any thoughtful study of Calvin's conception of the state. It is not fair to Calvin to praise him for things he himself denounced and disliked. And Calvin knew perfectly well what he disliked. He admirably defined Democracy and rejected it. The trifling extensions of the suffrage in Geneva were made simply to take in all of birth and property.

The "twin premises," as Professor Foster puts it,* of the *Institutes*, namely the Sovereignty of God and the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, were not as Calvin taught them, the natural foundation for an autonomous Democracy.

This Puritan State was not democracy. It may be questioned whether any democracy could have held its own amidst the storm and stress of the period. Calvin realized perfectly clearly the essential difference between democracy and aristocracy. His ideal was an aristocracy resting upon the consent of the people, and this aristocracy was to be no godless and material power, but a divine aristocracy resting upon the imperative call of God and strong in the sense of His almighty sovereignty. This very conception of Calvin's of the sovereignty of God was the basis of his political state. Men were ruled by God and the state was sovereign over men, but only

* Harvard Theological Review, Vol. I, No. 4, p. 396.

so far as that state obeyed the behests of God and represented honestly and righteously his sovereignty. Hence the Puritan State has always been in a high degree aristocratic, and logically so. For the thought of God that dominates Calvin is not the forgiving Fatherhood of God, but the conception of Power. And the thought of an external authority in the Bible is in close relation to that constitutional sovereignty which was the favored form in Calvinistic Europe.

Thus, in the last analysis, John Calvin made the church supreme. He fought the hierarchy with the hierarchy's own weapons. He would have been untrue to his principle, untrue to conscience and his God had he not handed over Servetus to the hands of an obedient state for proper and just punishment. Having pronounced sentence all Calvin could do was to ask for mercy, that Servetus might perish rather by the sword than by fire.

The Puritan State was built upon authority, supreme and unflinching. It is perfectly vain to plead the freedom of Calvin's occasional textual criticism as a ground for believing that he held modern views as to the fallibility of Scripture. He did nothing of the kind. Again and again, he states his ground strongly and freely, when once the text of Scripture has been ascertained we must bow to it in lowly reverence and listen to it as though God himself were speaking to us. Calvin met the authority of the papacy with the authority of the Scriptures and held aloft not only the letter of the New Testament but the letter of the Old as binding upon all men's conscience. And men felt the power of this appeal. We all desire to be under authority; thorough-going Protestantism has tremendous and startling responsibilities. Calvin's Puritan State took some of the weightiest of these from off men's shoulders.

This aristocratic republicanism was not especially modern in tone, but it suited the commercial trading world which had entered upon its imperial march. The speaker doubts,

however, whether Weber has demonstrated his main thesis that Calvinism and Capitalism are closely related in spirit.* In the Southern States in America Calvinism found the aristocratic slave feudalism far more to its mind than the industrial capitalism of New England. And at the time of the Evangelical revival in England it was not Calvinism but Arminianism that allied itself most closely with the industrial development. That Calvinism became the religion of the commercial nations is only partly true. England never was wholly Calvinistic, and Scotland was not commercial when she was most Calvinistic. Nor has it significance, as has been alleged, that Calvin defended interest, for in point of fact the Roman hierarchy had never really put it down. The commercial Republics of North Italy were all Roman Catholics, and devoutly so.

The strength of the Puritan State was its centralized aristocratic oligarchy, and in organizing the commercial oligarchy Calvin fought fire with fire. Over against the feudal Imperialism Calvin put the small, closely knit aristocratic oligarchy, and it won the battle in Switzerland and Holland, but it was beaten in France and England, and failed to maintain itself in New England.

Over against the Church Calvin put the external authority of the Bible as the Word of God, and this in a sense never true of German Protestantism or of the Anglican reformation. No theory of inspiration could be drawn that would have been too exacting for Calvin. Of the Scriptures he says, "The full authority which they ought to possess with the faithful is not recognized, unless they (the Scriptures) are believed to have come down from heaven, as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them,"† and many other passages assert the same thing.

* "Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus." Archiv für Socialwissenschaft und Socialpolitik XX.

† Institutes, Bk. I: 7:1

The Puritan State is built upon the Scriptures as an external authority binding all, and the Old Testament is on the same level with the New. *It is, in fact, a new theocracy.* This was its tremendous power. Its claims were set over against the Roman hierarchy with telling effect. It is not just to Calvin to say that "the State is distinct from the Church." What Calvin himself says is that "the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things widely separated."* When now he comes to the function of civil government he denounces "fanatics, indeed, indulging in unbridled license" who would separate Church and State. The function of the State in fact is "to foster and maintain the external worship of God, to defend sound doctrine and the condition of the Church, to adapt our conduct to human society, to form our manners to civil justice, to conciliate us to each other, to cherish common peace and tranquillity.† "Wherefore no man can doubt that civil authority is, in the sight of God, not only sacred and lawful, but the most sacred, and by far the most honorable of all stations in life."‡ Rulers are to be "a kind of image of the Divine Providence, guardianship, goodness, benevolence, and justice."§

Church and State in other words are both simply the theocracy functioning in two ways. The Church has the duty of preaching the word and administering the sacraments. The State has the duty of conserving the Church, watching over the true religion and enforcing the laws of God.

So far as Calvin rendered a service to modern liberty by pointing out the modern way in which political tyranny could be constitutionally checked, he only followed in the footsteps of Gregory the Great, Leo¹ and Gregory the Seventh. The Roman hierarchy had been a very real check on tyranny, and the success of the Reformation gave the world directly the tyranny of Henry VIII, Francis I, and all the little German princelings whose tyranny was unchecked until revolution

* Bk. IV: 20:1.

† Bk. IV: 20:2

‡ Bk. IV: 20:4.

§ Bk. IV: 20:6.

came; but revolution was not Calvin's prescription. The men that Calvin trained demanded not liberty for Holland, Scotland, England and America, but simply a new kind of tyranny, the tyranny of a church oligarchy; and this broke down everywhere; in Holland through the attacks of rationalistic Protestantism, in Scotland because of the haughty opposition of a landed feudalism, in England because Independency and Tory Churchmanship were too strong for it, and in America because of the free individualism engendered by French philosophy and the economic situation. But so long as it lasted it did successfully battle with Rome's tyranny.

Nor is it historically accurate to make Calvinism the protector of free intellectualism. The thing was abhorrent to the mind of Calvin. At this point the burning of Servetus is the sufficient answer. Calvinism did no more for education than the Roman hierarchy had done. It too established schools, colleges and universities, and the Jesuits became the most skillful teachers in Europe. But the teaching was within a closed system and therefore scholastic and ineffective. The same would have been true of Calvinistic education had it followed in Calvin's footsteps, only the closed system would have been the Old and New Testaments in the place of creedal Christianity, although even here Calvin bound free exegesis by the introduction of scholastic theology as a final interpretation of Scripture. Modernism grew up in spite of Calvinism and has had its hardest battles with the closely organized "authoritarianism" of Calvinism. Calvin never contemplated an "independent Church." Such a thing would have made his soul sick. The State had as its chief function the task of seeing that all men and women entered the Church. All citizens had to do it, or take the civil consequences. He believed in the "ancient apostolic discipline" enforced by fire and sword. To call that modernism is to abuse speech.

The principles of the Calvinistic Puritan State were authority, aristocracy, moral supervision of every detail of conduct,

thoroughgoing scholasticism, a divine Theocracy on the basis of the Old Testament, a sharp division between the ruled and the rulers, and severe discipline to maintain the *status*. Calvinism became to Protestantism what Jesuitism was to Rome; its military host to fight and defend it. And just as Romanism has had again and again to repudiate Jesuitism in the interests of its own life, and will now die if it fails to cast it off, so Protestantism has, in the higher interests of its own freedom, had to repudiate Calvinism as the Northern Presbyterian Church has formally done, and in practice all Protestantism since Hume and Kant has had to do.

When now we turn to mark the course of history, we realize the services Calvin rendered to the ultimate cause of human freedom. True it is that liberty and freedom were but by-products of Protestant forces. Calvin never expected to make men free to choose their own church and construct their own Bible, but in organizing a fighting force he rendered untold services to the ultimate liberation of human thought. The Puritan State was not always equally successful. In France it bore itself bravely and the Huguenots rendered a good account of the services of their swords, but Jesuitism proved too crafty for them in the end, and though they fought a brave battle, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes left them but a feeble folk. Not so in Holland, where the Puritan State stood guarded by dykes and angry waters and where one after Calvin's own heart held lonely watch over the fortunes of a seemingly shattered Protestantism; there Calvinism set its face like a flint and stood, scarred indeed and wounded, but triumphant, over against its foe. In England another military genius was fired by a conception modified indeed but yet drawn from John Calvin, and when Roundhead met the shock of Catholic Cavalier the stern Puritan rode the laughing Cavalier in dust and blood upon the field of defeat.

And yet here again the Puritan State did not long maintain itself. Having in God's providence served its purpose, other

and still larger Protestant forces practically swept it aside. In Scotland indeed it long guarded the northern hills and heaths, although even there with modifications which would have made Calvin's heart oft weary and sore.

When we turn our eyes to New England we see again the providence of God raising in the Puritan State an instrument to guard the feeble plantage of democracy on the bleak coast of New England. There a Puritan State was erected as hard, as unyielding, as tyrannical as that instrument Calvin forged on the banks of Geneva. But it also could only hold its own for a little, and the forces of disintegration began as early as the work of Roger Williams.

When thus we survey the field two or three things force themselves upon our attention. First, he who would claim to be a Calvinist must plant himself firmly upon Calvin's conception of the Church and State rather than upon his theology, for here is where his strength lay. But he must also realize the tremendous risks and dangers that beset the conception. Secondly, we must face the fact that the services of Calvin, like the services of Jesuitism, must largely be regarded as temporary and passing, in the very interests of that larger kingdom to which both Ignatius and Calvin gave their lives.

And, thirdly, this Puritan State is substantially sacerdotal. For Calvin and the Puritan State the ministry of the sacraments and the preaching of the word were the real notes of a true church. And only duly appointed ministers could properly either preach that word or administer the sacraments. In some sense Calvin at this point is even more unyielding than the Council of Trent. There was in this Puritan Church no room for the layman, save as a humble hearer and an obedient subject. The church is really constituted of ordained men, whether ordained to preaching or to ruling, and the tremendous force of this organization made itself felt at once in the politics of Europe.

Thus again, we find Calvin striking at false sacerdotalism with what he regarded as a true sacerdotalism, and some of his most vigorous work was done in the purifying of that priesthood which he regarded as the hope of the church.

And, lastly, we must remember that stern old John Calvin like John the Baptist of old stood at the threshold of a new world, into which he himself never really entered, and that the least in this new kingdom of God can look out with clearer eye and lighter heart than was possible to the fighting prophet of an older dispensation. The evangelical revival gave us again in something of its glory and its fullness the vision of God in the face of Christ Jesus our Lord. It is no longer possible for us to live as did John Calvin amidst the terrors of Sinai and the legal enactments of Judaism. But because he lived and died for his God, we through him have entered into the more splendid vision of the unfailing mercy and the everlasting kindness of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calvin was too great a man and the Puritan State too real an influence to blur the outline. They stood for things we now repudiate. They rendered defensive service as over against the attacks of Rome, but the work of reconstruction was faulty as far as it was along Puritan lines, and modern evangelical, post-Kantian Protestantism should be fully conscious of the world-wide difference that separates us from the reactionary scholastic and in essence Roman Catholic elements in the Puritan State as founded by Calvin. While yet we render all honor to the old hero. May each of us in his time and place render one tithe of his service in something like his loyalty and fidelity!

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